

The Race Away From Big

Nobody asked but ...

Ray Kurzweil has recently made a significant change in his view of the future regarding the relative association between biological man and artificial intelligence. Although his views should not be capsulized — he is a very broad thinker — it is worthy of note that he has expanded beyond thinking only of a singularity in which machines overtake, and make obsolete, human consciousness.

Now, Kurzweil recognizes that size matters. The incredible advancements that we have seen in the mechanical/cyber world have been mostly due to going small — miniaturization. We can do incredible things with technology because we have tamed its size. We are headed for nanotechnology.

The only reason why there is any question about man's ability to keep pace is because we have been winning the race away from big for a long time. The human brain has always been miniaturized. But now the ability to handle the disappearingly small is becoming the domain of machines. We do not have the capability to change the scale of brain matter as a dedicated biological process. We now must look to fabricating more cranial space for brain material and introducing nanotechnology in proliferation of the moving parts.

Normally those kinds of changes are made by the relatively slow process of genetic evolution, or the sudden appearance of new species to replace the old slow models. But humankind is approaching the brink where we can intervene. We are as likely to create a superspecies as we are to create general artificial intelligence.

— Kilgore Forelle